

Testimony of Jennifer Barrows
Avon Resident and Animal Welfare Advocate
Presented to the Judiciary Committee
April 5, 2013

In regard to
HB 6690 AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony **IN SUPPORT of H.B. 6690**. As someone who has worked in the animal welfare community both in Washington, DC and in Connecticut over the past 23 years, I am very heartened by the introduction and anticipated passing of HB 6690. This legislation, if and when enacted, will make a significant difference in the lives of neglected and abused pets who cannot speak for themselves and often are denied even the most basic necessities and comforts of life.

Those of you who are pet owners no doubt will agree: Pets are sentient beings. They need proper care, adequate food, water, shelter, and companionship, just like humans. When they are denied these needs, or worse, blatantly abused, such deliberate acts of cruelty should be considered unlawful and be punishable at a level commensurate with the crime. If passed, HB 6690 would allow the utilization of court-appointed advocates for animals during legal proceedings that concern an animal's welfare or custody. It also would allow the documentation of an animal's injuries and level of suffering, so that a court may make a more informed decision on the animal's welfare.

For many years, there have been cases where helpless pets were heinously tortured in the cruelest of ways, including being beaten, dragged, hanged, shot and stabbed. Unfortunately, most of these cases did not result in penalties that matched the severity of the crime. The provisions of HB 6690 would allow more information to come forth in court, fairer sentences to be imposed upon perpetrators, and hopefully help minimize future violence against animals.

Companion animals deserve to have their self interests protected. Although they cannot voice this, clearly they are conscious beings who care about their own welfare. The argument for better animal protection becomes even more compelling when one considers the human implications; it has long been understood and acknowledged that where animal abuse and/or neglect occur, there is often a correlative occurrence of human abuse.

Standing silently by as innocent animals continue to be abused and neglected makes us part of the problem, and when such violence escalates to a point where it involves a child, by then it is too late to prevent anything. Our pets are part of the community, like our children. Please put strong enforcements in place to ensure that they are protected and are able to live happy, healthy lives.

Thank you for your kind consideration.